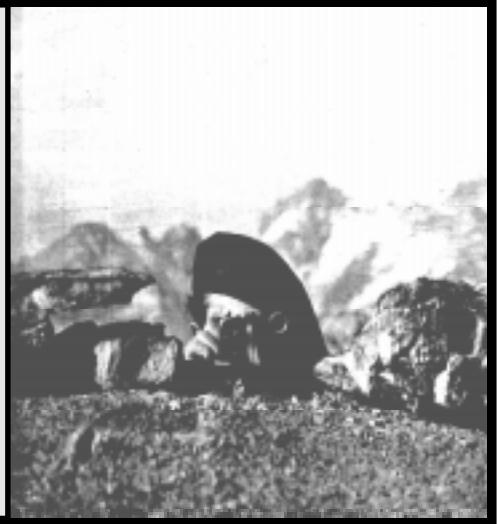


VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

Number 4

Sept 95



PREP FIRE

Hello and welcome to issue four of *View from The Trenches*. Things are beginning to grow at last, as the UK's ASL players seem to be coming out of the closet. Maybe it just took someone to do something.

Talking of which, one or two of you have offered to send stuff in for publication, but are worried that it might not be too good. Don't be. It's not the quality of the writing that counts, it's the fact that you are writing, communicating your ASL experiences with other ASL players that's important. That's one of the main reasons for *VFTT* existence, communication (I'll bet you can't talk ASL with many of your friends and workers without confusing them).

Talking of communication, it's good to be getting letters from some of you, even though I don't always write back. Lack of something to say back is the main reason why I don't always reply, for which I apologize. Some of your letters can also be answered a lot easier through *View From The Trenches*. None the less, keep those letters coming in.

And now, a question. Just how do you store your ASL counters? By my reckoning, there are some 9,828 counters in total for the system. That's an awful lot of counter trays if you use them, but does anyone have any other ways of storing their counters?

There seems to be much debate at the moment about the state of Avalon Hill. They have recently split with Atomic Games, who hold the copyright on the software for *Beyond Squad Leader*, the ASL computer game. It seems unlikely *BSL* will now see the light of day, and if Atomic Games do release it, it won't have the words *Squad Leader* in its name. Avalon Hill also seem to be plagued by financial problems, although they don't seem to be about to collapse. What this means for the next annual, *KGP II* and *March To Oblivion* is unknown at the moment. Let's hope they can get themselves sorted out and continue to support ASL.

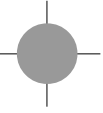
I hate to end on a sombre note, so, who's looking forward to Intensive Fire '95? Ten years of ASL, and this is the first time there's been an ASL convention in this country. So I hope to see you all there.

So until next time, roll low and prosper.

Pete Phillipps

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SOLITAIRE ASL

"It's already available in the States and should be available here within 4-6 weeks.", I wrote in the news feature last issue. So *Solitaire ASL* (*SASL*) decides to enter Britain on the day I mail the issue out. Oh well.

For £29.95, you get 22 pages of rules (Chapter S) and divider, numerous quick reference cards, one sheet of 260 counters, and 14 Mission cards. The production is up to the usual ASL standards, although table S17.82 is only partially printed on the divider, and also has different DRM listed (Bob McNamara has stated online that the rules are correct, and the extra DRM on the divider should be ignored).

The majority of the rules deal with the handling of enemy (or ENEMY in *SASL*-speak). Initially all you see are hoards of "S?" counters, which represent suspected enemy units. These remain in place until certain situations arise, such as a friendly unit moving within LOS of a S?, at which point a check is made to determine if the S? is an ENEMY unit, and if so, what sort of unit it is. Each nationality has its own set of tables for this purpose, with those for German, American, Russian and Partisan ENEMY forces included (the rest will eventually be released or printed in the annual).

Active ENEMY unit actions are determined primarily by DR on various tables, although there are a number of Automatic Actions which tend to over-ride any DR. Various rules deal with the handling of ENEMY fires, movement, routs and advances. The system itself is fairly straightforward, but does require a lot of die rolling and table checking, something which tends to be inevitable in any sort of solitaire system.

The player must also contend with the problem of Command Control. Basically a unit can only perform any non RPh/RtPh activity in its Player Turn if it makes a Command DR or is within 2 hexes of a leader who has already made his Command DR. Since the DR is based on Morale, it is easier to attack with good troops, which is historically accurate. I would love to see this rule

adapted to regular ASL (and suspect it probably will be).

SASL is designed to be used with its own Missions, rather than standard scenarios, which will no doubt disappoint some people. These cover a generic situation, such as "Cautious Advance", "Take The Highway" or "Tank Attack!". Most of the specifics, such as the mapboard, enemy placement, game length, and victory, are randomly determined before or during play, so no two Missions should be the same.

SASL also has a campaign game similar to those in RB or KGP. The rules suggest that one Mission be played per month of hostilities (or one per week for short campaigns such as Poland 39), but there seems to be no reason why you couldn't play more frequently (anyone for WW2 from Poland 1939 to Berlin 1945 day by day?).

My only reservation about *SASL* is that, like all solitaire games, you play on your own. To me, gaming is a social activity, and part of the fun of gaming is interacting with your opponent. You cannot simulate this with solitaire games (or computer games either).

Overall, *SASL* is a good system, which offers a good way to practice tactics and play of ASL without having to worry about making embarrassing mistakes in front of your opponent. I'm not sure if it's worth buying if you've got a regular FTF or PBM/PBEM opponent, but if you're a lone squad leader, then I'd have to recommend it.

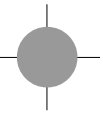
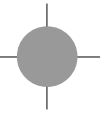
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sources. Most have come from Neil Stevens (the organiser of Intensive Fire '95) who passes on any responses he gets to his convention flyer. Others have come from an old-ish AHIKS list or from readers sending in names. I also had a few replies to an ad I placed on CompuServe.

As for frequency, check Final Fire at the bottom of the last page for details.

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TIME ON TARGET

Time On Target is an American ASL 'zine. Unlike many other US ASL 'zines, which tend to look at the play of ASL, *Time On Target* concentrates on producing a set of scenarios for a specific campaign in each issue. The first (and, to date, only) issue covers the Battle of the Bulge.

The twelve scenarios are varied enough to cover most levels of ASL play. Most of them feature infantry and armour (some also have OBA), but even some of these are small enough to play in an evening or a day. There are a pair of Deluxe scenarios, and three that use the KGP Stoumont Map Group, although one of these is not actually set around Stoumont. Although many of the scenarios make use of the KGP SSR, particularly Mist, none of them are too rules intensive [EXC: those that use Night (E1.) rules].

Time On Target also presents two new rules. Bayonet Charges are basically Human Waves useable by any nation, while Supplemental Armour covers the use of improvised vehicle armour in the field. Although both have been designed specifically for use in several of the *Time On Target* scenarios, they are both presented in such a way that they could be used in other scenarios by SSR.

The 'zine itself is twelve pages long, and presents designer's notes for each of the scenarios, and articles on the background behind the new rules. Although these are only brief, they are none the less interesting. A bibliography is also supplied so readers can follow up the articles if they wish.

Production wise, *Time On Target* is excellent for a fanzine. The scenario cards, like the more recent Avalon Hill ones, all feature photographs instead of line art. To be honest, if it wasn't for the producer's logo on them, you could easily mistake them for actual Avalon Hill scenarios.

I can certainly recommend *Time On Target*, especially if you're interested in the Battle of the Bulge. \$13 may seem like a high price to pay for a fanzine, but *Time On Target*

is more of a scenario pack with a set of designer's notes and extended SSR than a fanzine. In that respect it is excellent value.

Time on Target costs \$13 (including postage) and is available from Kinetic Energy Productions, PO Box 291580, Hollywood, CA 90027, America. Issue two should be out soon, although as yet its content has yet to be confirmed.

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INTENSIVE FIRE '95

This is an ASL convention being held at the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham, near Swindon, from 3-5 November. It will cater for both friendly and competitive play

Entry will be £5 for the weekend. Accommodation will be available for £35 per night full board (in the Officer's Mess).

The Friday will see tours of the College's AFV Hangar (with its King Tiger and fully working T34/85), the Small Arms Armoury, and the Wargaming and Simulations Laboratory. It will end with a get together in the Mess Bar.

Phillipe Leonard, designer of *Kampfgruppe Peiper* and editor of *ASL News*, will be bringing along the maps for *Kampfgruppe Peiper II*, while Paul Saunders will be bringing along a playtest version of *The Third Bring*.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Neil Stevens (18 Bower Green, Longcot, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 7TU. CIS 100333,3652) for an application form.



NON - COM - MUNICATION

Non-com: a non-commissioned officer (EG a Squad Leader).
Communication: to talk, exchange ideas and information.

BOB EBURNE, MILTON KEYNES

It was a pleasure to receive *VFTT*, well done! I hope along with Intensive Fire 95 that it will help to unite British ASL players.

I feel that we still have a lot to offer ASL. Look at the ratio of Normandy scenarios. A definite bias to American vs. German rather than British.

True, but look at any American wargame. Most tend to feature Americans or Russians, so ASL isn't alone in that respect. One way to change that of course is to design scenarios featuring British forces (hint, hint).

DEREK TOTCHER, MITCHAM

Thank you for sending me issue 3 of *VFTT*. I was pleased to see you are trying to get a British ASL newsletter off the ground and hope you are successful in promoting the ASL hobby in the UK.

I think that one of the biggest services you might provide through *VFTT* is to regularly publish a list of UK ASL players (with addresses and phone numbers of course).

I agree, but I'm not too sure about how people would feel if I printed their name and address. So, how would many of you object if I just printed my mailing list next issue? Or would you be happier if I just printed a full name and address on request, as I have done with a couple of readers this issue? Let me know what you all think about this.

GEORGE JAYCOCK, NOTTINGHAM

Thanks for the issue of *VFTT*. Much appreciated, but what is that view your graphics depict!?!?

It's suppose to be a soldier in a dug-out looking through his binoculars. Unfortunately it doesn't print too good on my printer. But it looks good on my computer!

Attempting myself to produce a periodic *Diplomacy* newsletter, I have sincere

appreciation for your efforts (honest!)

In response to Nick Brown's letter, "Death's Head At Lusho" (both versions) appeared in *The General* volume 20 number 6, under a *SL Clinic* article entitled "Have Your Own Scenario Published?" Version 1a as submitted was classed 85/15 pro-Russian and was rejected, as was the modified version 1b, still 60/40 pro-Russian.

STEVE TREASE, ABERDEEN

If there are any ASL players in the Aberdeen area I would like to meet you. My address is 67 Gairn Road, Aberdeen, AB1 6AP.

LEE BRIMMICOMBE-WOODS, LONDON

Anyone who is in the area should feel free to pay me a visit for some ASL. My address is 128d Barking Road, Canning Town, London, E16 1EN. Feel free to call me on (0171) 4746092.

BILL DURRANT, SOUTH DARENTH

Just got your mailing of *VFTT* which was a pleasant surprise. I am very keen to see any ASL related matter succeed and wish you all the best.

How often do you intend to publish? Issue 3 was my first so I'm unaware how often you mail. In fact I don't know how you got my details.

Names have come from a number of

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FINAL FIRE

That's all for this issue. Hope you enjoyed it. Feel free to write and tell me what you think, or even contribute.

Issue 5 should be out in November, just in time for Intensive Fire '95.

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is an independant British ASL newsletter. It is available free on request (although an SAE is much appreciated). All correspondence should be sent to Pete Phillipps, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester, LE5 0FQ. CIS 100665,267